

Thesis Handbook

Graduate Program on the Environment

Master of Environmental Studies

The Evergreen State College

Olympia, Washington

Revised: September 2016

Copies of this handbook are available online at: www.evergreen.edu/mes/thesisresources

Significance of the Thesis

The thesis is a major research experience. It should build upon your work as an undergraduate, as well as core programs, electives, internships and individual learning contracts, and work or volunteer experiences. Your past efforts should inform your thesis by providing critical thinking skills, examples of environmental case studies, and numerous viewpoints from which to think about problems and their solutions. For most students, the thesis is the most sophisticated writing project they have ever tackled. It differs substantially from the research papers and essays you have written for your electives and core programs. This thesis should serve as an impressive way to document your expertise in the professional world beyond the college.

I. Overview and Timeline

Students must successfully finish all four core classes as well as 12 elective credits before enrolling in thesis credits. Students must be able to complete their thesis work on time. Students should talk with their Case Studies faculty and reader about the feasibility of completing their thesis in the required time. The written thesis can take one of two structures: a traditional thesis format or a manuscript prepared for submission to an academic journal. Talk to your reader about which is appropriate for your work. See the [MES Thesis webpage](#) for all thesis deadlines, forms, and resources.

Students typically work on their thesis in their final year. They take the final core program, Case Studies and Thesis Design, in fall quarter. During this quarter, students are matched with a thesis reader who will advise them in their work and, ultimately, approve their thesis for credit. In Case Studies, students complete a Prospectus that must be signed by their thesis reader and the Director. Students enroll for thesis credits in winter and spring quarters (8 credits each quarter). They present their work toward the end of spring quarter and submit their final thesis by the last day of spring quarter. See the flowchart for specific dates.

Students may only present their work once a complete draft of their thesis has been approved by their thesis reader. In order to present, a “Request to Present Thesis Research” form must be signed by their thesis reader by the date indicated in that academic year’s thesis process flowchart. In rare cases, with permission from the student’s reader and the Director, a student may extend thesis work through either the summer quarter of the same academic year or the fall quarter of the next academic year. Extensions might be granted for spring/summer fieldwork, extended data collection and analysis, or other circumstances beyond a student’s control. Extensions will not be granted in situations where unsatisfactory progress is the primary reason for the request. If the student wishes to extend their thesis, a “Request to Extend Thesis Research” form must be signed by both the reader and the Director by the date listed in that academic year’s thesis process flowchart.

Failure to complete on time will result in a filing of No Credit by the reader. No Credit may also be filed if the student’s quality of work is not at the graduate thesis level. Earning No Credit for the thesis will lead to the student being withdrawn from the program for not completing the thesis requirement. Students who are approved to continue work on their thesis project beyond the required 16 thesis credits of the winter and spring quarters must register (and pay for) an additional four credits each quarter; this includes the quarter in which the thesis is submitted and the final public presentation is made. The extra thesis credits taken do not count toward the credits required for earning the MES degree.

Thesis Prospectus

If you begin the process with a solid Prospectus, you will increase both the efficiency and quality of your project. A final, approved prospectus (signed by you, your reader, and the Director) that outlines your thesis research plan is due in the program office before the end of Case Studies.

Getting Started on Thesis prior to Case Studies

Some students, especially those conducting seasonal fieldwork, may want to begin their thesis research prior to the development of a formal prospectus during Case Studies. Students who want to begin data collection should complete a “Preliminary Prospectus” in consultation with a MES core faculty member. Before collecting data, they must submit a copy of this “Preliminary Prospectus” signed by a faculty to the Director by Week 10 of Spring Quarter. Students who collect data without following this process are likely to waste time and resources because of poor experimental design or data collection techniques.

Registering for Thesis Credits

Students will register for eight credits of thesis directly with their reader in both winter and spring quarters of the year they are working on their thesis. You should register for credits with your thesis reader when you receive an email from the Assistant Director notifying you of the reader’s CRN number. Each quarter has a different CRN number. Thesis registration requires a faculty signature.

Thesis Reader and Thesis Workshop

The primary academic support is the thesis reader. Students should meet with their reader on a regular basis during the winter and spring quarters. All thesis students are required to attend a thesis workshop led by a MES faculty member during winter and spring quarters. This workshop provides additional support and structure for thesis preparation, research, and writing. The thesis evaluation by the student’s reader includes reference to student attendance and participation in the workshop. There is no CRN for the workshop.

Funding Your Thesis

Students are encouraged to find grants or fellowships to fund their research. There are several resources offered by the program to help you do so. Please see the Research Funding section of our [Financial Aid webpage](#) for more information.

II. The Writing Process

Writing Resources

Getting started on the writing of your thesis can be intimidating. Regardless of your level of experience as a writer, the start of your thesis work is an excellent time to review resources on effective writing in general, and thesis writing in particular. There are numerous written materials available to help in this regard. Here are a few that we recommend:

- *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* (4th Edition). Kjell Erik Rudestam and Rae R. Newton. 2014. Sage Publications. This book offers very useful advice on the entire process of thesis design and writing.
- *Form and Style*. Carole Slade and Robert Perrin. 2009. Houghton Mifflin. Provides guidance in both research and writing, including special sections on theses. Contains information on

reference and citation styles, including those styles allowed in MES theses (see the Formatting Requirements section below).

- *The Clockwork Muse: A Practical Guide to Writing Theses, Dissertations, and Books*. Eviatar Zerubavel. 1999. Harvard University Press. This guide is written in a somewhat simplistic style, but it has been helpful to a number of students in planning a detailed, practical writing schedule. It also covers some basic aspects of what to strive for in different drafts and how to electronically manage draft revisions.
- *On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction* (30th Anniversary Edition). William K. Zinsser. 2006. Harper Resource. This is a general guide to clear, concise, and effective non-fiction writing.
- *A Writer's Reference* (7th Edition). Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers. 2010. Bedford/St. Martin's. A good reference for questions related to grammar and style.
- *The Literature Review: A step-by-step guide for students*, Second Edition. Diana Ridley, Sage Publications, 2012. ISBN: 978-1446201435.
- *Writing Science: How to write papers that get cited and proposals that get funded*. Joshua Schimel. Oxford University Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-19-976024-4.
- *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, Fourth Edition. John W. Creswell. Sage Publications, 2013. ISBN: 978-1452226101.
- *The Craft of Research*, 3rd Edition. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. University of Chicago Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0226065663
- *The Elements of Style*, 4th Edition. William Strunk, Jr., E. B. White. Longman, 1999. ISBN: 978-0205309023.

Working with Your Reader

Your reader is probably your most valuable resource during the writing process—this person has written a thesis and/or dissertation already and understands what you are experiencing. You will be matched with a reader by the end of Case Studies. You should arrange to meet on a regular basis with your reader throughout the thesis project, and especially during the writing process. Early on, you should establish with your reader a procedure for delivering drafts of your thesis. Some readers prefer to receive a chapter at a time, while others want to see an entire draft before they begin reading.

Ask for your reader's advice on both the technical aspects of the research and on the writing, and be open to the advice you receive. If you run into any concerns regarding your reader, like lack of responsiveness, please talk to the Director.

Student Support Groups

Many students find that participating in a student support group during thesis writing can provide much needed structure and feedback. Such groups are formed as part of the Thesis Workshop and can also be developed independently. Other students can be extremely helpful when it comes to providing constructive criticism and proofreading each draft of your thesis.

Writing Assistance

Your faculty reader is not a writing instructor, tutor, or copy editor. Please do not expect them to perform any of these functions for you. If you would like outside assistance with your writing, please work with the student writing assistant, or the Writing Center

Tips for Effective Thesis Writing

Here are a few tips for the writing phase of your thesis project:

Don't put off the writing. One approach is to write parts of your thesis on a regular schedule. Having short pieces to show to your reader or to other students allows for quick feedback. Also, writing can help you to synthesize what you are learning, and thus can be invaluable even during the research phase of the project.

Plan plenty of time for rewrites. Your thesis will likely need to be rewritten several times in order for the final thesis to be as good as you are capable of making it. Your faculty reader will no doubt have substantial recommendations for each of these drafts. You should expect such comments and give yourself plenty of time to receive the feedback and make changes that respond to this feedback. Also be aware that writing and revising the results and discussion will require substantial time for data analysis and interpretation. The "revise and resubmit" process is a standard part of any academic publication. Since your faculty reader will need sufficient time to review each draft, this process can easily take two months. Remember that even small revisions in one part of your thesis can require changes in several other portions, which is quite time consuming. Given the fact that you must be approved to present by the date given in the thesis flow chart (usually early May), your first completed draft should be finished by April 15 or earlier. You will, of course, need to work out a specific schedule with your reader.

III. The Oral Presentation

As a key part of your thesis project, you will have the opportunity to share your results with faculty, staff, students, invited guests, and other members of the community in a public, oral presentation prior to submitting your completed thesis for binding. The oral thesis presentation is designed to give you practice in presenting your research in a professional manner and to provide an opportunity to receive feedback on your work. It is also a celebration of this major step toward completing the program.

Scheduling Your Presentation

Thesis presentations happen in Weeks 8 and 9 of spring quarter. Presentations are generally 10-15 minutes in length, with an additional 5 minutes allowed for questions. Because the presentations are scheduled one after the other, time limits are strictly enforced. Thus, presentations must be particularly concise. Students may only present once they have submitted a signed "Request to Present Thesis Research" form to the Director by the date indicated in that academic year's thesis process flowchart. This form indicates that their reader has reviewed a complete first draft of the student's thesis and determined that the student will be able to submit a final version by the end of the quarter.

Students who have a signed "Request to Extend Thesis Research" form to present in summer quarter or fall quarter must work with the Director to schedule a presentation time. These students must also have a signed "Request to Present Thesis Research" form in order to present.

Criteria for Judging Presentations

Individual faculty readers determine the criteria for judging thesis presentations. It is a good idea to check with your reader in advance regarding what criteria will be used to determine whether you meet the presentation requirement.

Tips for Great Thesis Presentations

Here are some ideas we have compiled to help ensure that your thesis presentation is effective:

Show your enthusiasm. You have worked long and hard on this project. The audience will appreciate this effort and will be interested if you convey your interest in the work.

Keep within the time limits. Speakers who exceed their allotted time will not be able to finish their presentations and lose time for questions.

Don't try to cover everything in your thesis. It is understood that your thesis document is more extensive than your presentation can be. Cover key components of your work, or pick a particularly interesting section to cover. The question and answer period will give you additional time to cover pieces of your work of specific interest to the audience.

Speak slowly and breathe. You might be tempted to talk fast, but if you can control this urge and slow things down, even pause at key points, your presentation will be more effective.

Practice your presentation. It is imperative to practice with other students or friends who can give you feedback. You'll want to practice staying within the time limits, making eye contact with the audience, and appearing relaxed and confident.

Use high-quality visual aids. The use of electronic presentation software such as PowerPoint is highly recommended. If you use overhead slides, make sure that they are clear and easy to read. Minimize text in slides, use type that is large enough to be seen from the back of the room (at least 30-point font), don't read your slides to the audience, and don't turn away from the audience to stare at the screen. Make sure you know how to operate the audio-visual equipment you will be using.

IV. Formatting Requirements

Your finished thesis will become a permanent document at the Evergreen library. These formatting requirements have been designed to make your thesis library-worthy.

References and Citations

Your thesis project will almost invariably build upon the efforts of researchers from other times and places, so it is important to clearly and accurately reference the work of others in your thesis. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of environmental studies, we offer some flexibility as to the documentation style used in MES theses. For specific information about how to cite references within text and how to list these references at the end of your thesis, you should choose a style, in consultation with your reader, which will most likely be from one of the following style manuals: (1) *Chicago Manual of Style*, (2) *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, or (3) *Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. These styles are summarized in *Form and Style (13th Edition)*, by Carole Slade (Houghton Mifflin, 2009). [Purdue OWL](#) is a great on-line source for citation guidelines.

Length

While there are no specific page limits for MES theses, past theses have ranged in length from about 50-250 pages, with the majority in the range of 80-100 pages.

Margins

The final printed version of your thesis should be single-sided and formatted with a 1.5" margin on the left to allow for binding. The other margins should be 1". Pages should be numbered (as described later in this section), and the numbers should appear in the lower right corner of the page, 3/4" from the edges of the page. Sometimes charts and graphs may have to be folded to fit or reduced to a smaller size. If folded, have the fold at least 1/2" from the right edge of the document. The folded sheet should also have at least a 1.5" left margin; if more than a single fold is required, the left-hand fold should be at least 1.5" from the left margin.

Line Spacing and Font

Text must be double-spaced, with indented quotes single-spaced. The font used should be 12-point Times New Roman, with headings no larger than 14 point. Paragraphs should be indented 1/2".

Paper and Printing

The paper used for the final bound copies of your thesis should be of high quality that will be lasting. Recycled paper or tree-free paper is acceptable for MES theses. The use of acid-free paper is highly encouraged.

The thesis copy submitted to the library must be single-sided. Any additional copies may be double-sided to save paper. If you print on both sides, make sure that the margin nearest the binding (the left margin on one side, and the right margin on the other side of the page) is 1.5 inches. To simplify, you are free to make both the left and right margins on all pages 1.5 inches.

It is recommended that the final copies of your thesis be printed using a high-quality copy machine, such as those found at a commercial copy center.

Required Pages in the Thesis

To help you with formatting, we have provided a thesis format template on the MES Thesis webpage. You might also consult with someone in Academic Computing or Scientific Computing (CAL) for help with setting up the numbering system on your computer.

All MES theses should contain the following pages (the pagination system is indicated in parentheses):

Flyleaf Page: (not numbered) A Flyleaf page (blank page) needs to be inserted at the *front* and *back* of each copy of your thesis.

Title Page: (not numbered; counted as page i) This is the first page of your written thesis. It contains the title, the full name of the author, a presentation statement, e.g. "submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Environmental Studies," and the date the thesis was completed. The date should be the month and year of the last week you took thesis credits. A sample Title page is included in Appendix A.

Copyright Page: (not numbered; counted as page ii) Although not required for copyright protection, since your thesis will be available as an electronic document through the Evergreen Library, you are strongly advised to include this page in order to make your copyright protection obvious to all readers. A sample Copyright page is shown in Appendix A.

Approval Page: (not numbered; counted as page iii) Following your title page is the approval/signature page signed and dated by your faculty reader. This page must be signed by your reader before being submitted for binding and before you can graduate. All copies of your bound thesis must have an approval page with an original signature from your reader. A sample Approval page is shown in the Appendix A.

Abstract: (not numbered; not counted in page numbering) The abstract is a concise summary of your topic, findings and conclusions. The abstract should be no longer than 300 words. The layout for the Abstract page is shown in Appendix A.

Table of Contents: (number first page as iv) The Table of Contents lists the chapter or major section titles by page number. First-level and second-level heads, describing paragraphs or paragraph sections, may be included as well. Following the chapter sections, and also listed by page number, are your references and appendices, if any.

List of Figures: (begins a new page; continue lower case Roman numerals) This list includes figure numbers, figure captions, and page numbers. Figures include photographs, drawings, maps, graphs, and charts—in other words, all illustrations except for tables.

List of Tables: (continue lower case Roman numerals) This list includes table numbers, table captions, and page numbers. It can be included on the same page as the List of Figures if there is sufficient room to fit both on a single page.

Acknowledgments: (continue lower case Roman numerals) As a matter of professional courtesy, any source, person or organization from whom you received substantive research and writing support should be acknowledged. Your reader(s) should always be acknowledged.

Text: (first text page is counted as page 1, which starts the numbering with Hindu-Arabic numerals—i.e., what used to be called Arabic numerals; continue with this numbering through the end of the document) Figures and tables should appear in the text as defined by the thesis style.

References or Notes: (continue with Hindu-Arabic numerals) The reference or note list at the end of your project documents all materials cited in the text and provides the information necessary to identify and retrieve each source. References listed must be cited in the text; conversely, each reference cited must appear in the reference or note list. The actual format of your reference or note list will depend on the documentation style that you choose.

Bibliography (optional): (continue with Hindu-Arabic numerals) You may include a bibliography, formatted according to the style you have chosen, listing sources pertinent to your topic but that are not necessarily explicitly cited in your thesis.

Appendices: (continue with Hindu-Arabic numerals) Materials that supplement your text, but which are not appropriate for inclusion, may be appended. Materials should be subdivided in logical sections and listed in the table of contents.

Colored Paper: (not numbered) A piece of colored paper should be inserted between copies of your thesis (if printing more than one) when they are submitted to the Student Assistant's Office (Lab 1, 3019) for binding.

V. Binding Requirements

Number of Copies

The program requires that at least one printed copy of your thesis, signed by your reader, be submitted to the Student Assistant's Office (Lab 1, 3019) for binding. An electronic copy must also be submitted. After binding, both the printed and electronic copies will be delivered to the Evergreen library. The printed copy will be stored in Archives and the electronic copy will go into circulation and will be accessible to library patrons. You might also want to have more copies bound to provide to your reader or yourself. The costs associated with formatting, printing, and binding all copies of your thesis, including the one that goes to the library, are your responsibility.

Approximate Cost

Theses are currently sent by the college to B & J Bookbinding in Corvallis, Oregon. Bound copies are lettered on the spine (author's name, program name, and the year), and on the front cover (title and author). See the "Layout of Cover on Bound Copies" in Appendix A for an example. Costs for binding vary depending on how many copies of your thesis you want to have bound and how many lines of print the title requires on the cover. The total cost also includes the lettering on the spine of each book and a one-time shipping and handling fee. The actual cost for binding your project will be calculated when you fill out the Thesis Binding Order Form found at the MES Thesis webpage.

Preparing Your Printed Thesis for Binding

The following are necessary steps to assure proper binding of your thesis:

1. Your thesis should be prepared in accordance with the formatting instructions described in the previous section. ***Please check each of your copies before submission to ensure that all required components are included and that the pages are in proper order.*** If your project is bound with components missing or if the page order is not correct, you will be responsible for the cost of corrections.
2. Remember that the Approval page, signed by your reader(s), must be included in each copy of your thesis. An example of the Approval page is shown in Appendix A.
3. Remember to include a flyleaf page (blank page) at the beginning and end of each copy of your thesis, and separate each copy with colored paper.
4. To determine the total cost of binding your thesis, fill out the Thesis Binding Order Form, found at the MES Thesis webpage
5. Once you have calculated your total cost, deposit your payment at the Cashier's Office (Library 1125, 360-867-6445) into the account number 29019-52504. The Cashier's Office will provide you with a receipt for your payment, and you will need to attach this receipt to the Thesis Binding Order Form.

Preparing a Digital Copy of Your Thesis

The program requires that you submit a copy of your completed thesis in PDF format for the Evergreen library's circulating collection. The digital thesis will be a **PDF file** identical to the

bound copy in composition and formatting with the sole exception that the Approval page should not contain digital signatures, for security reasons. Submit the digital copy as an attachment to mes@evergreen.edu.

Final Submission

Once you are ready to submit your thesis, please make an appointment with the Student Assistant by calling 360-867-5940. Prior to your appointment, make sure all copies of your thesis are in proper order and that you have submitted your payment to the Cashier's Office. When you are ready, please bring the following to your appointment in Lab I, Room 3019.

- At least one complete printed copy of your thesis. Make sure that the number of copies submitted is equal to the number ordered and that components such as the Flyleaf pages, Title page, and Approval page are included in each. Place a piece of colored paper between each copy of your thesis.
- One electronic copy of your thesis. Please follow instructions above.
- Payment receipt from the Cashier's Office. This must match the final number on your order form. The form can be found at the MES Thesis webpage.
- Two copies of the Thesis Binding Order Form that you used to determine the total cost. One copy will be kept for our records and one copy will be sent to B & J Bookbinding with your thesis.

The Student Assistant will confirm that your copies are in order, that all copies are signed by your reader, that you included an electronic copy, that the Thesis Binding Order Form is filled out correctly, and that you have a payment receipt.

Deadlines and Distribution of Bound Theses

Your printed and electronic thesis, with signatures and binding fees paid, is due no later than the Friday of Week 10 of the quarter in which you last took thesis credits. This allows time for your reader to write your thesis evaluation during evaluation week. You will earn credit for your thesis after you've presented, the office has your thesis with a signature from your reader, and your reader submits your thesis evaluation.

The Student Assistant will send off groups of theses to be bound at B & J Bookbinding. Turnaround time for binding varies from 4 to 6 weeks after mailing. Once the bound copies of your thesis return, one copy, along with the electronic copy, will be forwarded to the Evergreen library and any additional copies will be held for you in our office. You will then be notified to pick them up. We are not able to mail bound copies to students, but you may send a representative if you are not in the area.

Appendix A: Sample Pages

Please remember that items in brackets are individual to your thesis and the brackets should not be in your printed thesis.

[Title Page Layout]

[Start title 2" from top of page]

THESIS TITLE AT TOP WITH

[The title is 1.5 or double spaced]

A SECOND LINE OF THE TITLE
AND EVEN A THIRD LINE OR MORE

["by" is 5" from top of page]

by

[1.5 or double spaced]

{Name of Author}

[This text is single spaced]

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Environmental Studies

[Last line is 1" from bottom of page]

The Evergreen State College

[Date should be month and year of the

June 2014

final week in which you took thesis credits]

[Copyright Page Layout]

© {year} by {Your Name}. All rights reserved.

[Approval Page Layout]

This Thesis for the Master of Environmental Studies Degree

by

{ Your Name }

has been approved for

The Evergreen State College

by

[check with reader regarding
how they want their name listed]

{ Reader's Name }
Member of the Faculty

Date

[Abstract Page Layout]

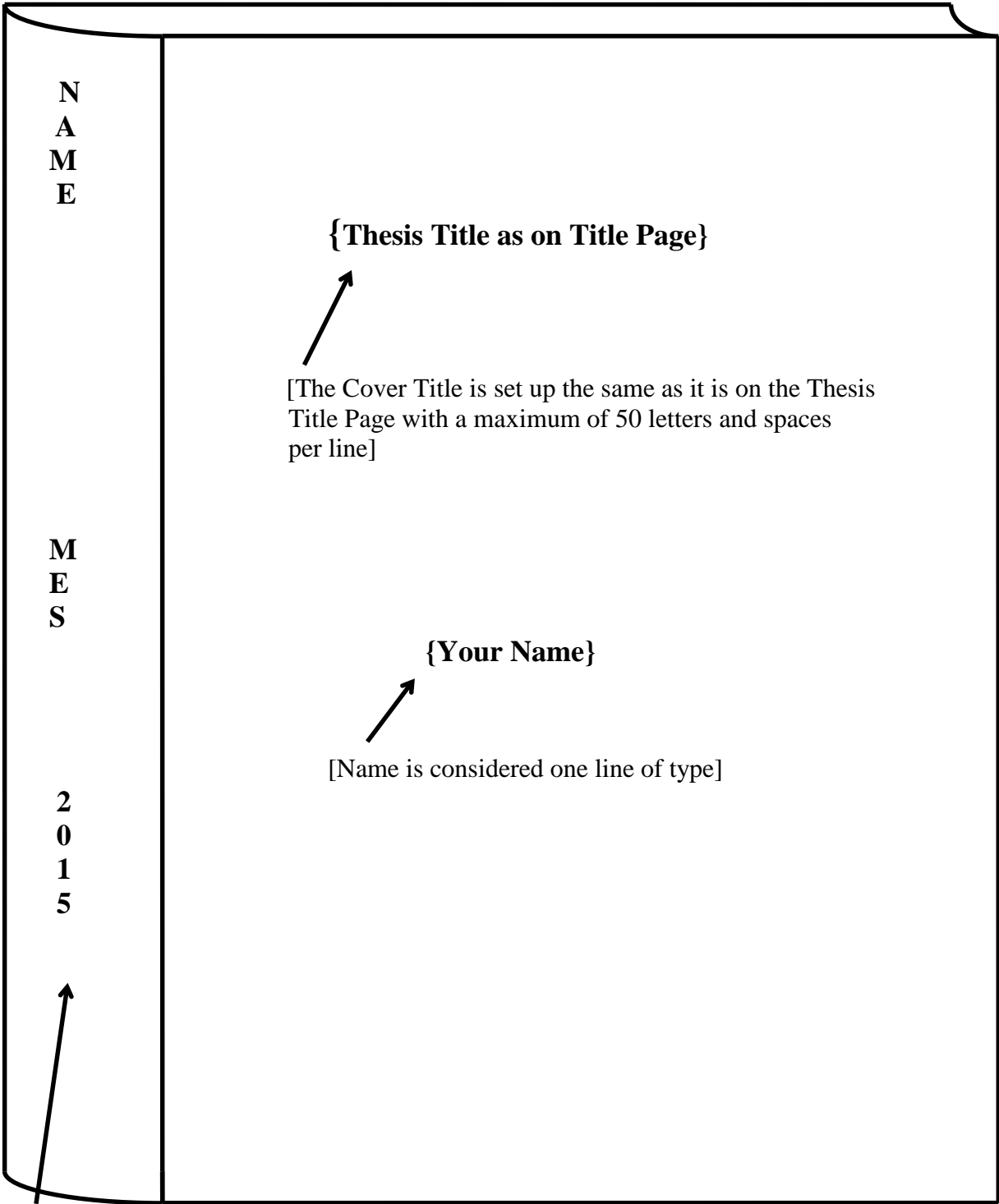
ABSTRACT

{ Title of Thesis -- single-spaced
if on more than one line }

{ Your Name }

{ Text: The text should be single-spaced and left-attributed, like this. Your abstract should be no more than 300 words, and describe succinctly your thesis, your basic findings, and conclusion. }

[Layout of Cover on Bound Copies]



[Book Spine - name, degree and year is considered one line of type]